

A Case Study Exploring the Holistic Potential of Social Dance  
for an Autistic Adolescent

by

Diona Peltes

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

Approved April 2018 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Rebecca Dyer, Chair  
Robert Kaplan  
Larry Caves

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2018

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study is to observe how social dance combined with somatic practices can encourage internal, physical perception and experiences of the body perceived from within for an adolescent boy with high functioning autism and dyspraxia; an impairment or immaturity of the organization of movement (Boon 7). More specifically, this research seeks to observe the impact that social dance instruction can have on an individual's kinesthetic responsiveness, such as efficiency in movement patterning through increased movement awareness and somatic facilitation. In addition, this study seeks to observe the impact that social dance lessons could have on the participant's communication and listening skills; attentiveness; initiation of movement, such as taking the role of a leader and lead patterns; organization of movements, such as performing movements within a specific order; and performance of movements that might lead to personal and social growth. Finally, this study investigates exercises from Alexander Technique and ways to incorporate them into pedagogical practices for adolescents with psychological limitations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose Statement .....	3
Problem Statement .....	4
Assumptions .....	4
Delimitations .....	5
Limitations of the Study .....	5
2 CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE INFORMING THE RESEARCH .....	6
3 METHODOLOGY .....	11
4 PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	13
Phase 1: .....	13
Phase 2: Development of Curriculum .....	19
5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	33
6 CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY.....	43
WORKS CITED .....	45
APPENDIX	
A INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORMS .....	47
B LESSON PLAN EXAMPLES .....	55
C PARTICIPANT SURVEYS .....	83
D CAREGIVER SURVEYS .....	85

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Ballroom dance became a passion of mine eighteen years ago at age seventeen when I started training at a Fred Astaire Dance Studio. I was drawn to social dance because I saw it as sophisticated and I enjoyed the social aspect of it. Ballroom dance provided an emotional outlet for me and helped me to connect with myself and to others in ways that were perhaps lacking in the other relationships in my life. Over time as I danced competitively, performed and taught lessons, I realized I was less interested in the competitive and performative aspects of social dance, and more interested in what I will refer to as its holistic potential, which includes the physical, physiological and social impacts it may have on students. I started researching how social dance might help individuals struggling with various limitations. After reading an article that studied Argentine Tango dance and its impact on Parkinson's disease, I became very interested in learning more about ways in which social dance instruction could impact the lives of people with Parkinson's or other physical, debilitating injuries that compromise movement. This research influenced me to conduct a research project which involved a five-month pilot study that took place from May to August 2016. During this study, I collected information regarding social dance, particularly Argentine Tango, and its effects on the movement control of a young man who had suffered a spinal injury that resulted in paralysis from the waist down.

Over the evolution of this project, my goal shifted from studying the impact that Argentine Tango dance patterns had on the individual's movement, to creating a three-minute dance routine that he and I could perform. We were successful in presenting this

work during two performances at ASU's Graduate Dance Concert October 27th & 28th, 2016 at the Margaret Gisiolo Theater, and both he and I were happy with what we accomplished together.

Throughout the development of this initial project I collected video recordings of each practice session. I also administered a short questionnaire at the end of the study, which provided information regarding the physical, social and emotional impacts this project had on my partner. Following its completion, I became even more invested in exploring ways that social dance could impact the lives of people limited by physical and psychological factors. Although the focus of the initial Tango project was not on psychological challenges, as the project developed I became more aware of the psychological factors that support social and emotional wellness. This interest paved the way for my most recent research.

In December of 2016 I started working with a fifteen-year old boy whom I will refer to as James. James is an individual with high functioning autism who has a specific learning difficulty called Dyspraxia. Some specific challenges of James that I have observed include poor listening skills, an inability to concentrate, lack of body awareness, lack of interest in sequencing dance patterns and finally, a lack of eye contact and communication skills. When working with James on a weekly basis, our lessons led me to wonder how I could develop more meaningful and effective learning frameworks that would meet James' distinct needs. In addition, our lessons challenged me to rethink my pedagogical values and practices. For example, I questioned the importance of the standard ballroom dancing frame and the related aesthetics of the style. Is it important to label what we are doing as ballroom dance, and if so, are the aesthetics of this style

relevant to what we are doing? How should I proceed with a student who is unable to build lessons cumulatively like other students I work with? These specific inquiries led me to research this topic further, and present my findings at ImpulsTanz's International Dance Festival and Symposium held June 29, 2017 in Vienna, Austria. Due to personal interests and time invested in this project, I was inspired to continue this research and deepen it for my MFA thesis research project.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study is to observe how social dance combined with somatic practices could encourage internal, physical perception and experiences of the body as perceived from within for an adolescent boy with high functioning autism and dyspraxia; “an impairment or immaturity of the organization of movement” (Boon 7). More specifically, this research seeks to observe the impact that social dance instruction can have on an individual's kinesthetic responsiveness, such as efficiency in movement patterning through increased movement awareness and somatic facilitation. In addition, this study seeks to observe the impact that social dance lessons may have on the participant's communication and listening skills; attentiveness; initiation of movement, such as taking the role of a leader and lead patterns; organization of movements, such as performing movements within a specific order; and performance of movements that might lead to personal and social growth. Finally, this study investigates concepts from Alexander Technique and ways to incorporate them into pedagogical practices for adolescents with physical and psychological limitations.

The study examines the concepts of kinesthetic responsiveness (to develop new and more efficient movement patterning through increased movement awareness and

somatic facilitation); attentiveness (the action of paying close attention to something; being aware of how and when to be polite and courteous); internal, physical perception and experiences of the body as perceived from within; initiation of social dance patterns; communication and listening skills; the potential for personal and social growth (specifically the organization of movement and performance of movements that may lead to personal and social growth); and how somatic exercises can be incorporated into pedagogical practices for adolescents with psychological limitations.

### Problem Statement

Questions guiding the research included: How can dance educators develop more meaningful and effective learning frameworks for adolescent learners with distinct learning needs and social challenges such as autism? What pedagogical values and practices might support James as a learner? Is it important to maintain standard ballroom practices, traditions and protocols and the related aesthetics of the style in teaching ballroom dance regardless of the purposes of the instruction? Is it important to label what we are doing as ballroom dance, and if so, are the aesthetics of this style relevant to what we are doing? How should an instructor proceed with a student who is unable to build lessons cumulatively like other students they work with?

### Assumptions

Prior to working with James, it was assumed that he would be able to perform and retain bronze level dance patterns in both smooth and rhythm dance styles, and that the participant would be focused and engaged during lessons. Competitors in Ballroom dance compete at their level, and move up in level once they have won a title in that bracket. Bronze level dance patterns are patterns that fall under a specific style, which typically

consists of approximately fifteen patterns. Beyond Bronze, there is Silver, followed by Gold and Open Gold level dance patterns.

In regards to this study, it was assumed that we would build upon five dance styles, adding new material while reviewing old material each time we met. The lesson plans were tailored towards specific objectives, and were designed to have some flexibility with anchor goals and themes for each of the units. It was assumed that somatic approaches and pedagogical constructs would yield positive outcomes with an autistic adolescent.

#### Delimitations

I decided this case study was going to be conducted for a set period of time, from August 28, 2017 to December 15, 2017. I would be working with only one participant, James, and surveying both the participant and the participant's caregiver. I gathered data from one outside source, the participant's caregiver, as well as data from the participant.

#### Limitations of the study

The study was limited in that I only had a certain amount of time to conduct this study, which limited the amount of data collected. As such, it was not a longitudinal study where I would benefit from a long period of time to work with the participant. In addition, there was a certain amount of progress during this time, but this study was not conducted over different periods of time throughout his age development. Finally, this was a single case study, so participation on behalf of the participant and the participant's caregiver was crucial for the success of this project.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITURATURE INFORMING THE RESEARCH

During the design and development of this study, it was important for me to better understand Autism Spectrum Disorder and Dyspraxia, also known as “developmental dyspraxia”. A greater understanding of related terminology and specifics associated with the disorders, such as general behaviors, challenges, anxieties, triggers for anxiety, cognitive abilities and bodily awareness also became important. In addition, a greater understanding of therapies available to individuals with ASD, such as dance movement therapy, music therapy, occupational and habilitation therapies was essential to this study.

So what does Autism Spectrum Disorder mean? According to *Autism and Asperger Syndrome: A Spectrum of Disability*, Autism spectrum disorder, or *ASD*, refers to “a severe developmental disorder” that “occurs before age 3 and persists throughout life” (Cohen and Remillard 617). ASD is categorized by three main disabilities that are part of the Pervasive Developmental Disorder: (1) failure to develop normal social interactions and relationships, (2) language delay and communication disability, and (3) restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped behaviors (Cohen and Remillard 617). In addition, individuals with ASD are generally categorized as either low-functioning or high-functioning on the autism spectrum, where the “distinction between LFA and HFA consists mainly of the fluency and flexibility of expressive language skills”. Additionally, individuals with ASD may have structural abnormalities that affect the brain, such as “impairments with frontal lobe and right hemisphere lesions” as well as abnormalities with auditory cortical processing of complex sounds, affecting an individual’s response to sound or inadequate behavioral responses” (Cohen, Remillard 618).

Next, the disorder known as Developmental Dyspraxia refers to a brain condition in children which affects the initiation, organization and performance of movements, causing a disruption in the delivery of messages to the body, or “impairment or immaturity of the organization of movement” (Boon 7). In Dyspraxia, there are tests that assess an individual’s coordination, balance and motor skills to evaluate how much the condition affects the individual.

Per research, some of the challenges that individuals with autism face may include difficulty with speech, communication, gross and fine motor skills, proprioception, self-awareness, sensory processing, social skills and physical health and wellness (Lara and Bowers 20). Accessing and retrieving information in both short term and long term memory banks may also be difficult as the pathways may not exist, or transmitters may be impaired. In addition, “differentiating between where their body ends and the environment begins” (Lara and Bowers 9) may also be at a deficit for an individual with autism, as “the left and right brain hemispheres have difficulty communicating with each other (Lara and Bowers 30). Per Dr. Temple Grandin, “the brain and body have to truly work as one unit, and it is through this combined brain and body effort that we – all of us – move from basic fundamental processing of the daily variables in our environment to deductive, inductive and finally analytical thinking processes” (Lara and Bowers 11).

What dance movement therapy programs have found is that dance can be an “effective form for people with developmental, medical, social, physical and psychological impairments” (LeFeber 463), as dance increases “sensory motor and perceptual motor development, directly targeting the motor deficits often faced by

children with autism spectrum disorder” (LeFeber 465). When researching various therapy options for individuals with autism, I found two specific methods that utilized dance. The first method, Dance/Movement therapy, is “the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual” (American Dance Therapy Association 2008). The second approach, Autism Movement Therapy Method, created by Joanne Lara along with Keri Bowers, focuses on: wrapping sensory integration procedures, structured movement, music, modeling, and Positive Behavior Support. Individuals engaging in the movements making up AMT train their brains to develop greater awareness and control of their bodies within their environment” (Lara and Bowers, 10).

AMT is a movement therapy that “blends multi-sensory, structured movement and music experiences with Positive Behavior Support (PBS) to connect the left and right hemispheres of the brain” (Lara and Bowers 25). AMT utilizes three areas: (1) Gross motor skills, such as movement coordination of arms, legs and other large body parts and movement, (2) Fine motor skills, such as movements that occur in the wrists, hands, fingers, feet and toes, and (3) Cognitive aptitude, performing higher mental processes of reasoning, understanding and problem solving (Lara 2009). AMT proved to be an important source for this case study, as AMT movement concepts were implemented into lesson plans for this study.

As I read LeFeber’s work, these therapies interested me more in their potential for the study and the changes I hoped to see in James. According to Mariah Meyer LeFeber: behavior is communicative, personality is reflected through movement, changes in movement will eventually lead to changes in personality, and the larger an

individual's movement repertoire, the more options individuals have when it comes time for them to cope with the environment. (464)

Next, exercises that encouraged greater postural awareness became an important part of this project. The first concept, known as Forward Head Posture, is “one of the commonly recognized types of poor head postures in the sagittal plane” (Shaghayegh, Ahmadi, Maroufi, Sarrafzadeh 3577). I displayed images of poor forward head posture as well as led exercises to encourage greater awareness of habitual head and neck patterning.

The next concept used in this study, called the Alexander Technique, is a method that “hones in and effects the body to make positive changes... to use the mind to talk your body into calming down” (Briceland and Rickover 2017). It is a practice that teaches “the better use of ourselves that results in better positions”. The creator of Alexander Technique, F. Matthias Alexander, was an Australian actor whom lived from 1869 to 1955 (Madden 13). During a solo performance of Shakespeare, Alexander “lost his voice and apparently ‘croaked’ his way to the finish” (Madden 13). These re-occurring incidents of losing his voice while acting led Alexander to spend over sixty years of his life leading experiments that helped him to better understand the use of himself (Alexander 24-25). In Alexander lessons, Alexander Technique practitioners guide participants through a way of thinking “in such a way as to increase their connection with the torso while leaving the fundamental balance of the head, neck and back undisturbed... muscle groups within the limbs are encouraged to release to their full resting length” (Alexander 41). The Alexander Technique encompasses seven operational ideas that “unlock our highest potential” which are: use and functioning, the whole

person, primary control, unreliable sensory appreciation, inhibition, direction and ends and means. For this particular case study, I focused on the four concepts of good use: (1) Allow the neck to release so that the head can balance forward and up. (2) Allow the torso to release into length and width. (3) Allow the legs to release away from the pelvis. (4) Allow the shoulders to release out to the sides (Shaw, 2018).

Finally, exercises that encouraged greater somatic awareness were utilized within this case study to bring about greater bodily awareness. The word soma is an ancient Greek word that refers to (1) the body, and (2) the body regulated from within, (3) the body perceived by the self, (4) the experience of body, self, and otherness, and also (5) body as nature in lived experience. Secondly, soma is the “organic physical body... and body and soul (or psyche)” (Fraleigh xx-xxi). Thirdly, somatic movement practices are movements that are “voluntary and, as such, subject to control of the somatic nervous system” (Fraleigh xxiii).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

When this study began I had already been working with James as a student for eight months after his caregiver sought me out to work with him. As I recognized the potential impact of my work with James and the pedagogical implications of a sustained study examining my interactions with James, I obtained the appropriate approvals from his caregiver and the ASU Institutional Review Board to use James as a case study participant for this research. The study consisted of developing, implementing, and assessing curriculum and teaching strategies designed specifically for working with James over a five-month period once a week for 45 minutes each lesson.

Two interviews were conducted with James and James' caregiver, who is also his sister and habilitation therapist, one towards the end of the study and one after the study concluded. I also had informal conversations with her before and throughout the process to gain additional insight into James' condition and ongoing progress inside the dance classroom and in his outside life. The interview questions for James were geared towards better understanding what dance styles he preferred, what he learned, and what he wanted to learn. For James' sister, interview questions were geared towards better understanding the impact that social dance instruction might have or did have on her brother, be it positive or negative.

Going into the project, I believed the potential benefits that this participant might experience included increased gross and fine motor skills, increased cognitive abilities, increased kinesthetic responsiveness, heightened attentiveness, greater communication and listening skills, and personal and social growth. There were two phases of the project,

phase 1, which was from August 28 to October 9, 2017, and phase 2, from October 10 to December 15, 2017. Phase 1 emphasized assessing James' needs and learning aptitudes. It introduced concepts and teaching approaches of the curriculum. Phase 2 built upon what was learned and investigated in the first phase and developed more advanced strategies and learning scaffolds to support James in his personal interests and goals.

## CHAPTER 4

### PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Phase 1:

When I first started working with James, I was unsure of where to begin. He had never taken a dance class before, so I started slowly introducing him to the basics of ballroom and Latin dances. Within the first few lessons I began to analyze his posture and movement to gain a better understanding of his abilities as well as his capacity to comprehend and follow steps. In addition, I assessed his willingness to hold my hands and take the standard ballroom partner stance known as dance frame.

Because it was new for James, he had no idea of how to walk on and off a shared dance floor space. Every time we would begin a lesson, he would ignore my greetings and run head first onto the dance floor, stomping his feet loudly as he made his way to the other side of the studio. This caused a lot of distraction for the other instructors and students sharing the same space. When we would dance, he would continue to stomp his feet, and would disregard my requests to step more softly. After explaining the importance of stepping softly a few different ways, I decided to try a different tactic. I asked him to imagine that people were beneath us, sleeping, and that we did not want to wake them. This worked for a minute or two, but he reverted right back to stomping. It took several lessons before James could soften his steps and learn the patterns that I was teaching him.

Over time, these tendencies started to improve. He started to say hello to me before lessons, and answer some of the questions that I would ask before our lessons



began. My dialogue with him was inspired by themes he was most interested in, not necessarily what I thought was most essential to learning social dance. As time passed, James continued to run onto the dance floor, but it was noticeably more quiet. I began to see improvement in his understanding of respect for others sharing the same space, as well as an understanding of the dance patterns that I was teaching him. He started to remember several of the dances, and became interested in the music and dance styles that went along with them.

Within a few months, one lesson a week turned into two lessons a week. James was enjoying dance. It was at that time that his mom, who did not regularly come to our lessons with James, expressed to me that dancing was helping him, as she was seeing improvements in his movement. She also mentioned that dancing was very therapeutic, and was surprised that it was not considered a mainstream form of therapy.

After approximately four months of lessons, James was starting to enter the dance floor by gently walking up to the sound system while saying hello to me. He was becoming more comfortable in selecting his own music on the computer, and took time searching for his favorite songs and asking if they fit into a Rumba rhythm, which was his favorite dance at that time. He began to acknowledge the other instructors, especially the ones that had been saying hello to him ever since his first day of dance. He started to hold short conversations with me, mainly to ask questions such as “what are they dancing” and “why are they dancing unfitting dances” when he noticed dancers were dancing a style that did not belong with the music being played.

A few months later, I noticed that James was very interested in watching everyone else in our lessons, something I learned to be more patient with as his instructor. His eyes

often wandered approximately ten minutes into our lessons, unless he was engaged in the patterns or movements that I was showing him. In addition, I noticed that he was tending to watch other dancers, and wanted to learn what they were learning, which was typically an extremely complicated pattern or dance. I then began to introduce more complicated patterns, which he could often replicate, but as soon as the music changed, he was ready to move onto the next dance, another factor that I learned to be patient with as his instructor.

About half way through the study I interviewed James' sister regarding the impact that dance was having on her brother. In regards to James' movement before he began dance, she mentioned that he used to move a lot less. She also mentioned that James is much more social now, but she was unsure if it was from dance or from the combined tutoring sessions with his therapists. She mentioned that he started to talk to his guitar teacher recently, which was a contrast from when he had first started lessons with his teacher a year ago. She shared with me that James would begin his guitar lessons by sitting down with the instructor but disregard his teacher's questions. His instructor would ask him how he was, and James would look at him without answering. This led to his teacher answering his own questions, and hold conversations without James ever responding. Over time, James started to develop conversations with his teacher, holding various conversations about different kinds of music on a regular basis.

After learning this information about James from his sister, I set out to reassess our goals and develop an effective pedagogical framework specifically for James. For example, I began allowing James to change dances every time the music changed because of his interest in doing the correct dances to the correct music. This was the biggest

challenge for me as his instructor during this phase. Because James enjoyed learning in the classroom with other dancers, we were tied to music that other instructors were playing, therefore we were never able to focus on just one or two dance styles and had to shift with the changing music styles.

In some ways this learning structure was good, because he had the opportunity to learn several dances and retain most of the patterns within each dance. On the other hand, this was difficult for me, because I was unable to build on social dance movement concepts in the systematic and repetitive way that builds skills in many of my other students. I tried teaching him complicated dance patterns to see if that would hold his interest. I tried blocking his view by moving my head in the direction he was looking, but he just laughed. None of these things kept him focused with eyes on me. He continued to be distracted by others in the same space, so I asked him if he would like to move to the junior studio where no one else is working. He never chose that option, and the times we worked in the junior studio he continually asked me why we were not with the other dancers. The feeling of inclusion in the learning community is very important to him. This realization led me to build this social and community building aspect into my lesson plan. The classroom experience became much more interactive for him, and there were times when we participated as audience members for others dancing in the room. James really enjoyed rhythmically clapping to show his enthusiasm for the other couples dancing.

In summary, I believed James has retained much of the information we worked on. He can dance the basics in several ballroom and rhythm dances. He enjoyed when I quizzed him on the names of the dances that went along with the music he heard. It was

apparent that he knew the information we were covering for example, the name of the song we were dancing to, but that did not stop him from walking over to the computer to read the name of the song on the playlist for himself.

While his posture, social skills, movement and dancing ability had improved, at this point in Phase 1, I still felt that there was more that we could have accomplished if I had better known how to approach his learning. I asked his sister if she had any tips or tricks she utilizes to keep him on track, since she works with him as well. She suggested that I call him back when he wanders off, or that I offer a reward system to get him to cooperate. She mentioned that he likes to joke around, especially with his mother, so he takes advantage of the situation because he thinks it's funny. I have noticed this as well, so giving in and joking with him allows him to trust me more. However it does not keep us on track the way I am used to teaching, so I have had to reevaluate my instructional values to meet James' learning needs.

I noticed that when I worked with James, he was more comfortable taking a cuddle dance frame, where I came to his side and we were arm in arm, side by side with one another. It was when I tried to take ballroom dance frame, and raised his right arm to my shoulder blade when he got uncomfortable and started to laugh, which caused him to drop his arm down to my waist, or to completely remove it. I asked him if it is okay or uncomfortable, and he just smiled, laughed, and shrunk. I noticed that he is much more responsive to dancing in a cuddle position, possibly because it has the effect of being swaddled. I was able to discuss my work with James with Martha Eddy, a somatic movement therapist, and she suggested meeting him where he is at. I decided if he is more comfortable dancing with his arms down, that I should allow him to do so, and

gradually try to incorporate the frame. It was here that I started to question the importance of the ballroom dance frame. Is it that important or might I encourage James to progress without dance frame for a period of time until he has the comfort and confidence of moving into a more extended and open upper body configuration?

Next, I began exploring the use of eye tracking exercises that drew from somatic awareness to help James stay focused and feel comfortable doing turns. When working with his eyes closed he was able to block out some of his physical distractions and sense his body moving in space more. Then we expanded the concept of eye tracking where I encouraged James to pay attention to his own movements, his movements with me, and the outer environment. A focus on eye tracking helped to organize James' body patterning and made a difference in his ability to execute the more complex dance movements.

Within this first phase of the project, the shape of my curricular research with James was in process, as I was considering where to begin, assessing movement abilities, evaluating his willingness to participate and finally, observing his retention of dance patterns to develop a pedagogical framework that would meet his distinct needs. In addition, the information collected from James' sister during the first survey was taken into consideration, to shape both phase 1 and 2. In Phase 2, it was my hope to develop an even more meaningful and effective strategy that would further my abilities and perspectives as a dance educator.

## Phase 2: Development of Curriculum

In phase two, I analyzed data from phase 1 and considered the input from James' sister. From this information, I built learning experiences into a curriculum to meet James' specific learning needs and goals. The curriculum was comprised of four learning units:

Unit 1- Awareness of Self and Partner through Increased Body & Movement Articulation

Unit 2 - Relationship and Awareness to Others and Environment

Unit 3 - Negotiating between Self and Others; Communicating and Listening

Appropriately

Unit 4 - Concepts of Alexander Technique

The curriculum for this study was divided into four quarters with three units per quarter. Each unit lesson was forty-five minutes in length and lasted one week. Within the first unit of Quarter 1, awareness of self and partner through increased body and movement articulation and efficient movement patterning was the focus. I led James through a proprioceptive exercise that explored using a tennis ball underneath his feet and hands to investigate the relationship of these as they touched the tennis ball, the floor or potentially, a partner. The objective of this experience was to encourage greater bodily awareness and partnership connection through enhancing responsiveness through the hands and feet. Within this lesson I noticed that James was very engaged with the exercise which utilized the tennis ball. He was having difficulty gripping the tennis ball with the bottom of his shoe, so he decided to take his shoe off and experiment without shoes. Because the ball continued to slip from underneath his feet during the initial

exercise, I decided to modify the exercise so that we could experiment with the ball underneath the palms of our hands while sitting on the floor.

James was very excited to play with a tennis ball, and often found ways to modify the exercise so that it would work in our environment (hard wood floors are slick). At first, James reacted to the exercise by repeatedly asking if we were going to place our stinky feet on the tennis balls. I tried my best to hold back from laughing and replied “Yes, let’s place our stinky feet on the tennis ball”. I felt that he was engaged throughout the entire lesson, and that he had fun experimenting in this way.

The second lesson in Unit 2, Quarter 1 focused on self and partner awareness, with main objectives focused on greater self and partner awareness using the senses to encourage greater kinesthetic awareness. In addition, I included exercises that encouraged attentiveness, initiation and partnership connection. To begin, I led James through a roll down exercise initiating from the top of the head to the lower half of the spine. Next, I introduced a self-awareness exercise that utilized F.M. Alexander’s four “Concepts of Good Use”, facilitated a body scan exercise involving the senses, and incorporated ideokinesis exercises involving the spine, forward head posture and alignment.

For example, I asked James to roll down one vertebra at a time so that his upper body was folded forward from the waist over his legs. I asked him to imagine his spine as a long string of light switches. From there I asked him to slowly roll up, one vertebra at a time while imagining each vertebra as a light switch turning off. In addition, I used tactile assistance to help demonstrate the light switch turning off. The goal of this lesson was to help encourage muscle tension release, and to help James recognize his posture,

particularly involving his head and neck, as well as any overworked muscles that may contribute to bodily misalignment.

I noticed that James was engaged throughout the lesson, however, he tended to make repetitive statements as to why he does not stand up straight. James stated that he has always stood “like this”, and demonstrated a hunched over position with his head and upper body. He continued by stating that all his friends stand that way, and that he has been standing “that way” his entire life. I responded by asking him to just try standing the new way for me, because Ballroom dance is largely about standing with proper alignment. In addition, I requested he try and implement this same posture from the moment he enters the dance studio to the moment he exits the dance studio. He responded by adjusting his head and body posture, but quickly reverted to his comfortable body posture unless I reminded him to stand tall with his head lengthening away from his pelvis.

The third lesson in Unit 3, Quarter 1 focused on attentiveness to partner. The goals of Unit 3 included interpretation of movement patterning and leading with intention. I started by leading James through a warm-up that incorporated basic arm and foot movements in Salsa dance. Next, I led James through an eye tracking exercise that explored tracking specific walls or partner facings, then I expanded the exercises and incorporated them into basic Salsa dance patterns. I focused on anatomical and bodily responses that come from eye tracking specific walls or facings. For example, we discovered how the body will follow the eyes when they focus in a specific direction. I asked James if he had noticed his movement improve at all with the incorporation of eye tracking. James often replied “yes” to many of the questions that I asked him, so



assessing whether this worked for him or not was difficult. However, I observed an improvement in his leading abilities after we explored eye tracking, as his connection and lead were more clear and provided a better sense of direction in terms of where he wanted me to go.

The next exercise involved connection with a partner. I led James through an exercise that focused on hand connections and various weight shift exercises. This built upon the previous exercise we did where we applied pressure of the palms and feet into tennis balls. I asked James to lean his weight towards me using about three pounds of pressure, then to hang away from me while still connected. Through this we explored sharing weight towards each other and shifting weight away from each other. Next, we experimented with connections and sharing weight within specific dance patterns. Finally, we combined eye tracking with hand to hand connection while dancing basic Salsa dance patterns. I noticed this lesson helped James gain a greater awareness of self and improved his connection to me while leading.

The focus of the fourth lesson Unit 4 in Quarter 2 dealt with relationships to the environment, awareness to others and spatial Awareness. Main objectives for this lesson included increased awareness to self, partner, environment and spatial pathways, and increased kinesthetic responsiveness. I led James through a warm-up activity that involved stretching, body isolations, weight shifts and Rumba dance patterns. I noticed during the warm-up that James was mirroring my actions well, and that he could replicate everything except the stretch involving standing with the upper body folded forward, reaching for the floor. During the stretches James started to make small whining noises as

though the stretches were difficult or painful, which led me to think that the movements were new to him.

At the beginning of the lesson James wanted to dance Salsa, but I informed him that I had an entire lesson plan that covered Quickstep. I modified the lesson plan and started with Salsa dance as a way to compromise so that we could get to the Quickstep I had planned. It worked! We were able to move forward, and I led James through a complicated running, skip and step hop sequence for Quickstep. James was having a great time skipping and jumping and he displayed his happiness through smiles and laughter. During our session, we were stopped by other dancers to ask us what we were doing. This was really self-affirming to James for members of the classroom community to address him directly and ask him about his dancing.

James had all the attention from dancers sharing the same dance space, especially a group of young ladies. Typically, it's the other way around, where James is fixated on what the ladies' group is dancing. In addition, we received compliments from other dancers saying they were so amazed at how well he was doing. While overall this lesson was one of our most successful lessons, James shared with me that the movements were hard, so I modified the steps so that he could understand them better and not lose interest in the activity. If I were to present this particular lesson in the future, I would alter the curriculum and simplify some of the movements.

The fifth lesson of Unit 7, Quarter 3 dealt with communication skills. More specifically, this unit addressed topics of appropriate, thoughtful responses and greater listening and response skills. To begin this lesson, I led James through a leader/follower mirroring warm-up exercise that incorporated the isolation of body parts, with the

follower mimicking movement of the leader in order to explore shapes, levels and the isolation of body parts. I noticed that James enjoyed this exercise because he was free to explore equilibrium and shapes, which is something he often tried to implement and explore during our practices. It appeared he loved the sensation of falling off balance and experimenting with his sense of equilibrium or finding states of disequilibrium. At first, I was a bit resistant to this idea because it felt counter intuitive to ballroom dance postures, but I realized it was something that made James feel very embodied and present, and it helped him to understand his place in space and his ability to shift his weight and to recover his balance.

The next part of this lesson incorporated music, and James was asked to select a song and analyze the song's mood, style, and any storyline or message that the song may be suggesting. After this, we experimented with embodying the characteristics within the song while dancing a specific set of patterns that could be performed in any order. We drew inspiration from the Laban efforts such as quickness, sustained time and light weight.

Finally, we built a set of patterns that could be repeated in one specific order to a different song that I chose in advance. We utilized the song along with the choice of any characteristics that had been incorporated into the movement earlier. The goal of this lesson plan was to determine if James could stay attentive and focused while dancing one dance style during one entire dance lesson. In addition, I explored his ability to communicate appropriately by providing suitable responses to my questions as well as his willingness to contribute to the choreographic process.

James was extremely cooperative throughout the lesson, and stayed focused until approximately the last 10 minutes, at which time he became distracted and only wanted to dance appropriate dances to the appropriate music. During this time, there was another instructor and student preparing for a dance competition by dancing rounds of Waltzes, Tango's, Viennese Waltzes and Foxtrots. I was very impressed with James' ability to dance each dance to the songs that were played. I noted in my journal that it felt as though we were on the dance floor competing, as we were alongside two other couples dancing the exact same patterns in perfect unison. It occurred to me how much James had learned and retained thus far. This was about three months into the curricular study, although I had been working with him for approximately eight months prior to this. At this point I was very happy with our progress. Within this same journal reflection, I made a note about James finally agreeing to perform a dance routine with me for our studio's next showcase. This was certainly a turning point in our lessons. I had been asking James to perform a showcase number with me for several months prior, because I believed it would help him stay focused on one dance style to have a larger goal in mind. Previously, James avoided the question, changed the subject, or walked away from me if I asked him if he was interested. After this lesson, we built an East Coast Swing dance to a song that he selected, and have continued to work on choreography for this dance.

The sixth lesson in Unit 8, Quarter 3 focused on self and artistic expression. The unit goals included exploring equilibrium, sensing self, feeling one's place in space, and movement improvisation. In this lesson, I led James through a warm-up experience which utilized foot, calf and knee articulation, leg swings and rise and fall technique in the Waltz. Following the warm-up, I asked James how he would modify a ballroom or Latin

dance. I asked him to experiment by exploring with movement that was off balance, tipped sideways, and tipped forwards. Next I asked him to explore his own personal kinesphere and find new ways of moving to the music. From there, we investigated ways of sharing weight, and he moved with his eyes closed. The purpose of having James close his eyes was to heighten his other sensations and also to decrease distractions. The final experience included a mirroring exercise with both of us facing each other rather than towards a mirror. My intention was to activate his mirror neurons to encourage vertical awareness and alignment, greater carriage and lengthening in the limbs, and greater sensitivity to his partner.

During the warm-up experience, James followed the leg swing exercises that utilized forward and backward swinging of the leg and could successfully shift weight from side to side. He tried to do the next exercise involving calf raises with rise and fall technique, but was only able to demonstrate a few raises before giving up. These actions were difficult for James because they were new, and he lacked the strength and coordination to relevé (rise) and find balance. In addition, it exhausted his muscles as he started to make noises which indicated he was tired.

During the creative portion of this lesson plan, I gave James the opportunity to get creative with Rumba and create unusual or different movement. He mentioned that he did not know how to modify patterns. Instead, he led me repeatedly through outside turns that were on unusual counts. If I were to do this exercise with him again I would ask him to play with rhythms, such as explore different rhythmical timings while leading Rumba walks for example. Rumba walks are typically danced slow, quick quick slow, but could be danced slow, quick and quick and slow, or slow slow quick quick slow. I noticed that

James was goofing off during this task because he repeatedly led me into underarm turns after I asked him to explore timing. Perhaps this was because he did not understand what I was asking of him.

This led me to modify the lesson plan and incorporate West Coast Swing dance. I demonstrated for James the various ways this dance could be modified, and asked him to be a follower to observe how to improvise throughout the dance. I added an underarm turn for me as the leader, and asked James to repeat this as a leader. I noted in my journal that he followed well and led well. He led his underarm turn successfully and learned a complicated pattern, but again, his concentration broke the moment a Rumba song started, so I decided to switch gears and see if we could observe other dancers sharing the same space.

We spent a few minutes observing other dancers' body postures within our shared dance space. I asked James to observe how Decho Kraev, a 5 time dance champion that teaches at my studio, moves through the Tango. There is uprightness, his head is on the top of his spine, his spine is long and there is a sense of lift in his posture. I asked James to try emulating the same posture, and he stood up tall, arms lifted and elbows wide for about 20 seconds before he dropped his arms and started drooping with his upper body. Previously when I asked him to be tall, I provided a tactile aid by lightly tapping his scapula and cervical vertebrae. However, this tactic only worked for a short moment, and then he reverted right back to his old habits of slouching.

Here I used mirroring as a new tool for this. I found it to be more helpful to mirror postures in dance frame. I took a moment to explain mirror neurons and how they work, then I led him through a few exercises that went from a slouched posture to a lifted

posture. I noticed that in dance frame, he would lift his upper body when I lifted mine, and the moment he slouched, I would make a point to lift, then he would respond by lifting. He was more responsive to lifting through mirror neurons than me asking him to lift. Overall, we had great success with this lesson, but were only able to focus on standing tall for a short time before James became fatigued, stopped dancing, and started to grab his lower back.

The seventh lesson in Unit 9, Quarter 3 focused on listening skills, more specifically, appropriate responses that show an ability to listen, respect for others and follow directions. During this lesson I led James through a review of the choreography that had been previously created and we danced the phrase to the same song. Next, we talked about adding elements into our dance, and I asked if there was anything in particular he would like to implement. He contributed his thoughts by asking if we could do something “like this”, and demonstrated a progressive walk forward and backward with arms leading right, left, right, left followed by a jump with both arms towards the ceiling. I said “Sure!” Moments later as he was teaching me how to do the movement, he mentioned it was from the video game *Just Dance*. As it turns out, the song was from his video game, and it’s one he often practices to at home. Each time we went through the choreography with music, James would laugh hysterically during the sections that he contributed. I could tell that he was having a great time, but his inability to stay focused during his sections of choreography was distracting. His behavior improved once I stopped the lesson to ask him what was so funny. This created an opportunity for him to express his feelings about something he created.

This lesson was effective because James contributed to choreography for the first time. We worked on one dance only for the entire forty-five minutes and worked by ourselves in the junior ballroom, which was quite an accomplishment. Previously, when I had tried to use the back room for our lessons, James would repeatedly ask me why we were not dancing in the other room with everyone else. This time, it was James' idea to go and work in the junior ballroom away from everyone. This was another turning point in the study.

The eighth lesson in Unit 10, Quarter 4 focused on different ways of moving and awareness of postural habits. We began with a warm-up which involved rolling down to the floor from the top of the head to the lower lumbar region of the spine. Next, we moved into side stretches right and left. The final movement in our warm-up included leg swings while standing side by side of each other connected for balance.

The next experience in this lesson involved reading other dancers in the room to observe the emotions of other dancers in the environment. I asked James to sense how the dancers were feeling, to notice if they were conveying a specific message or emotion through their body language or movement, and to decipher what kind of expression they were showing. In the final part of the lesson, we reviewed the quickstep sequence, which included the step hops, skips and running steps, but did them while implementing the qualities that we pointed out in other dancers we had just observed.

James was cooperative in following directions, and observed the other dancers and their expressions/emotions, putting what he observed into words such as “happy”, “excited” and “having fun”. We explored implementing these qualities into our own dances, including the Rumba, West Coast Swing and Salsa, but it was not long before



James was distracted and unable to stay on track with the lesson plan. I noted in my journal that James continued to have difficulties staying focused with his eyes on me. It was during this lesson when I decided to notify James that he had a habit of squeezing my hand while dancing in frame. I suggested he ease up with his hand hold, but he repeatedly denied that he was squeezing my hands, so I modified the hand hold to open palms faced upwards towards the ceiling to eliminate pressure in the hand hold.

Reflecting on previous lessons up until this point, I noticed that James was cooperative and enjoys dance, but also enjoys joking around. James tended to make jokes often, asked repetitive questions and had a habit of getting us both off track. As his instructor, I strived to stay on task while entertaining some of his jokes and comments. While I improved my ability to regain James' attention, I also noticed that precious minutes from each of our lessons were being wasted. This is an area that continued to be an issue, however, it improved and I made a commitment to finding additional strategies that would serve both our needs as our lessons progressed.

The ninth lesson in Unit 11, Quarter 4 focused on inhibition and direction, with a main objective of initiating unconscious reactions. Unit goals included postural awareness and increased awareness to partner connection. In this lesson, I led James through an exercise that explored hand connections, weight sharing, partnered movement forward and backward, and increased sensations in movement. The next experience utilized the senses and connections within social dance patterns. The final experience explored dancing in frame with eyes closed to enhance the connection of dancing with another partner.

During this lesson, I noticed that James was having a hard time closing his eyes while dancing, although we had done an experience previously with eyes closed. He would often squint his eyes, or keep one of his eyes open while trying to dance with the other eye closed, so he was unable to dance movements with both eyes closed. If I were to instruct this lesson again, I would try the same exercise to see if anything had changed. I would encourage him to trust his sense of spatial awareness even with his eyes closed. I feel there would be value in revisiting this lesson, as it would encourage greater internal awareness for James and James' self-confidence.

The tenth lesson in Unit 12, Quarter 4 focused on Inhibition and Direction with a Partner, inhibiting natural tendencies while sharing equal weight, staying connected and grounded within a partnership. During the first experience, I guided James through an Alexander Technique exercise called "20 Tension Relieving Tips" by AT practitioner, Mark Josefsberg. This exercise allowed James to release tension throughout his entire body. During the second experience, I led James through a spatial pathway exercise that traveled through general space and pathways. During this lesson, I ended up modifying the lesson plan slightly by utilizing shape changes while dancing smooth dances. I demonstrated how the rib cage can shape from right to left, allowing the head, rib cage and hips to stretch away to create counterbalance. Next, we implemented these shapes into a Foxtrot combination, where we exaggerated the shaping of our Foxtrot Basics and Weave patterns.

James responded positively to this lesson and implemented shape changes within his own body with little assistance from me. I also introduced a complicated Silver Foxtrot combination that involved passing of the feet and sways. James was able to

implement these shape changes by the end of the lesson. He was successful in exploring various ways of moving through smooth dance patterns. In addition, he had the opportunity to learn about passing his feet during a natural and reverse turn, and learned a chair check, slip pivot and weave, all of which are complicated, silver level Foxtrot dance patterns. In silver level ballroom dancing, dancers have mastered the bronze level ballroom dance patterns, and are ready to start learning more complex patterns that allow the passing of the feet. I would be interested in repeating this lesson plan in the future to see how James has retained his ability for shaping and remembering these dance patterns. Given the immense detail required to execute these patterns properly, I am curious to know whether he could lead the patterns if I were to review the dance terminology with him.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The caregiver's surveys and conversations helped to inform me in this case study, and provided information from beginning to end about the impact that social dance has had on James. The first survey for James' sister was conducted on November 20, 2017, and the second survey was conducted two months after the study concluded on February 3, 2018. The first survey for James was conducted on November 16, 2017 and the second interview was conducted on February 2, 2018. The interviews with James' sister provided me with insight into what worked well for James, information about his behavioral patterns, and how he was feeling from lesson to lesson.

Through these interviews I learned that James improved in the areas of movement coordination, communication, socialization, emotional wellness, and that he showed improvements with his stimming behavior, which are "odd, unusual, or repetitive behaviors" such as hand flapping and body rocking that are referred to as stimming in individuals with autism (Bakan 133). During the first interview James' sister shared with me that James "doesn't hit the walls as randomly as he did before. He used to run through the hallways and slam his hands all over the walls". In addition, she noted, "he's more comfortable being out in public. I wouldn't take him to the grocery store because he'd get annoyed if anybody got next to him... the people in the dance room he got used to. He still minds it a little bit [grocery store], but it's not as bad".

As mentioned previously, James showed improvement in his communication skills and movement abilities. For example, his sister shared with me that her brother began guitar lessons around the same time he started dance lessons. Previously, her

brother would not talk to his guitar teacher, even when his teacher asked him questions. His teacher developed a way to ask and answer his own questions. Recently, James opened up to his guitar teacher, and the two of them now have discussions about different kinds of music. In regards to James' movement before he started dance, she relayed that there was a lot less of it. She went on to say that James is much more social now, though it is hard to say if it is directly related to dance lessons or if it's from all his tutoring sessions combined.

The caregiver's second survey conducted two months after the case study concluded, provided additional insight regarding the impact of this case study. In terms of James' movement since starting dance, she stated that he is "more normalized from when he was little... he doesn't hit the doors with his body anymore" and noticed he bangs on things a lot less. I asked James' sister if social dance lessons have helped him stay focused/attentive during movement experiences, she answered "definitely, yes... he is actually lasting a lot longer with those sorts of things and doing it regularly". Recently, James has been playing the videogame *Just Dance* at home, so he is continuing to practice dance outside of his ballroom dance lessons.

When I asked his sister if James has showed greater kinesthetic responsiveness or an expanded range of movement since beginning dance, she shared that "he's really good at the dance thing... he uses his whole body to do all of the movements" even though he could easily sit and do the movements with one arm. His sister stated that she has had to move furniture to allow him more space for movement. Additionally, he tries to dance full out, but tends to hit the light fixture above, so he has had to adjust his movement in that space.

She also responded that James has been more comfortable with people, especially with people that touch or brush up against him. She noticed that a teacher at the dance studio said “hello” to James while putting a hand on his shoulder, “and it’s really unusual for other people to touch him and for him to not flinch away, not because he’s actually bothered by it... he’s just not good at interacting with people and so it’s interesting to see him be like, oh, what, yes”. She went on to say that “the amount of interaction that you guys get is more interaction than my roommates get... he’s said three sentences to my roommates in the last several months”.

I asked if she noticed any improvements or changes in his communication skills. She shared that he made improvements and she noticed “the fact that he acknowledges other people around him is an improvement... he does not run away when meeting new people like he used to”. In addition, I asked her what his mood was like after his dance lessons, and she stated that “he’s really happy and talks a lot more after”.

It was important to work with a family member on this study because it gave me a better understanding of what was going on with James outside of the studio. For example, there were a few lessons where James was not acting like his usual, bubbly self. Instead, he was tired and acted bored and disinterested. I found out later that it was a minor, medical related issue causing his mood swings, and not my uninteresting lessons. In addition, it was nice to have a family member so dedicated, connected and concerned about her brother and his education. She spends hours every day of the week to drive her brother to therapy sessions. She connects with his therapists and has discussions about her brother’s progress and what he has been working on.

I entered into this investigation with three broad questions and a number of sub-research questions relating to how somatic approaches to social dance might help individuals struggling with various learning or psychological limitations. I was curious about how I might integrate concepts such as kinesthetic responsiveness, movement efficiency, social skills and community awareness building into the context of teaching ballroom dance to adolescents with special needs.

When designing curriculum for this specific case study, it was important to observe particular tendencies, difficulties and challenges that James was experiencing during our lessons. In my assessment of James' learning progress in phase 1, I noticed some of his learning assets included, 1) he asked several questions related to music and the appropriateness of dance styles with music, which demonstrated an interest and an ability to distinguish the difference in rhythms and melodies, 2) he would engage in dialogue about things he was interested in, 3) he felt more comfortable moving in certain dance frames, 4) and he felt feelings of inclusion in the learning community, which I discovered was very important to him. Some of the areas for growth I observed in phase 1 that I wanted to address in phase 2 included, 1) James' tendency to watch other dancers instead of focusing on his own movement, 2) James wanting to learn what others were learning, 3) his difficulty sustaining his focus on a given dance when the music changed, 4) his tendency to wander off around the room during our dance lessons, 5) his eyes and focus meandering through the room, 6) James being distracted and giving attention to others sharing the same space, 7) his lack of dance etiquette awareness while walking on and off the dance floor, 8) an ability to acknowledge others when someone begins a conversation, 9) James' habit of joking with me to divert the direction of the lesson, 10)

his challenge in building on social dance movement concepts in a repetitive and progressive manner, 11) and James' diminished ability to focus on just one or two dance styles per lesson.

In regards to how might social dance help individuals struggling with various learning and psychological limitations, I found that social dance has significantly improved the areas of cognitive aptitude, increased socialization and communication skills, motor coordination, kinesthetic responsiveness and finally, the willingness to cooperate and listen. One of the positive behavioral outcomes of this study is that James likes to be out in public more than he used to be, as he used to dislike other children bumping or running past him. Now, he only minds it a little, whereas before in his sister's words, he would "hate it". His communication skills have also improved, as he now "acknowledges other people around him, he doesn't run away like he used to" when his sister's friends try to talk to James.

Throughout this project, I discovered productive ways to address specific behaviors and challenges through dance. For example, I found a way to incorporate tapping and clapping the rhythms into our lessons which helped to redirect stimming behavior. In addition, I incorporated lessons that observed other dancers sharing the same dance space to find creative ways to improve the distractions and loss of eye contact that continued to challenge our lessons. Finally, I incorporated lessons that experimented with equilibrium, as it was useful to explore different kinds of movement and weight shifts that are not typical of ballroom dance to allow more room for movement exploration.

Regarding how somatic exercises might be incorporated into pedagogical practices for adolescents with psychological limitations, I found it helpful to incorporate



Alexander Technique and Ideokinesis concepts, as well as increased body awareness exercises such as body scans and postural awareness experiences into the curriculum. These methodologies provided the participant an opportunity to explore movement and gain greater bodily and partner awareness. Finally, I incorporated some proprioceptive exercises that fostered greater awareness of the hands and feet to encourage greater connection to the floor and partner.

While investigating my question of how social dance and somatic practices might enhance a dancer's kinesthetic responsiveness, attentiveness, physical perception of a dancer's own body, initiation of social dance patterns, and ability to communicate and listen, as well as increase the potential for personal and social growth, I discovered that social dance combined with somatic practices can enhance a dancer's performance and organization of movement. For example, several lessons within this study incorporated a warm-up that encompassed stretching, mirroring, cardiovascular exercises, body articulation and isolations. These exercises allowed me to introduce concepts that were new to James, such as stretching, lengthening body parts such as arms and legs, standing tall while lengthening the head away from the shoulders and finally, rotation in the upper and lower half of the body.

Related to the study of attentiveness I found that warm-up exercises helped James stay engaged and focused for a longer period. Having the opportunity to warm-up before getting into partnered dance made a positive impact on our lessons. Specifically, James lasted longer physically during his dance lessons as well as when he plays his *Just Dance* video game. His attention span improved throughout the study and I observed an increase in his stamina.

In terms of teaching James to initiate social dance patterns, I believe I need to continue working with James and to develop new teaching strategies that help foster these capabilities in him. When I asked James to initiate a dance pattern, he acted as though he could not hear me, and he lead me in one movement repetitively, which was typically a basic dance pattern, such as a Rumba box followed by an under arm turn. There were only two instances where James willingly led patterns without me calling them out or back lead. If I did not call out specific dance patterns, he would repeat the basic steps only.

Another question I held entering into this research was how social dance and somatic practices might enhance a dancer's internal, physical perception and experiences of the body as perceived from within. Since this is an internal, subjective question, it is difficult to deduce the exact impact social dance and somatic practices had on James. However, as the observer, I noticed an improvement in his response time moving through movement patterns. I noticed instances where James remembered specific techniques that indicate his motor coordination improved. There is still a slight disconnect for James in knowing the right from the left side of his body and there were several instances where I reminded James to send his left leg forward, then I repeated "other left leg", followed by "that's your right leg, use your other leg". On the other hand, James demonstrated improvement in fine motor skills, such as pointing his foot to the side without weight. In addition, he remembered to incorporate his arms while dancing without me requesting him to. I am curious to know if his ability to remember his arm movements are due to mirror neurons or learned body patterning.

My research also explored the potential for social dance to encourage personal and social growth. He is much more social with me as well as with other instructors in the studio now. He has also come a long way since his very first lesson. Many of the instructors have commented on his progress, and other students often told us how impressed they are by his progress. He connects with other students outside of the dance studio, and they share with each other what they know about dance. In addition, as shared earlier, James is more comfortable going shopping or going into public places, he talks more with his guitar teacher, he excels in social skills, all of which demonstrate improvement in personal and social growth.

The final question I posed was whether traditional dance forms and skills such as dance frame were all that important, or would it be beneficial to dance without demanding dance frame for a period of time until a level of comfort and confidence in moving was developed and a more extended and opened body configuration was formed. This study led me to realize that traditional dance forms and steps such as dance frame are not the most important aspects of teaching social dance, especially when working with students such as James. I did not incorporate frame into every one of our lessons, in fact most patterns were danced in open hand hold because I was able to capture much more of his attention and responsiveness this way. I found that moving the focus into this kind of hand hold, because James tended to squeeze my hands while leading traditional dance frame, allowed us to have a more open connection without him having tension in his upper body.

There were a number of learning activities that were less effective or did not grab James' attention for very long, particularly Latin techniques that used a lot of specificity

in body actions, as James did not care about the details. James wanted to switch dances every time the music changed, which made it difficult to stick to a lesson plan or a specific dance. In addition, parental involvement was not present, and I was unable to collect any information regarding the impact that this has had on James outside of the studio. Finally, James' survey responses were not as informative as I had hoped, as James tended to avoid certain questions with joke like responses.

If I were to conduct this research again, I would do some things differently. I would request more parental involvement, as important information through surveys was never collected. Additionally, I would reserve a room to work in (unless lessons utilized exercises that observed others) so that we would have less distractions during lessons as well as the ability to play specific music on the sound system. I would be a little more assertive in sticking to lesson plans, as I tended to veer off from the main objectives because of James' requests to change dance styles. Finally, I would add more props, images and video to grasp James' attention. I utilized some images and videos, but it may be worth exploring more to see if it would help James stay focused and engaged.

What I have learned from this experience

I have learned many things from this experience. First and foremost, I have learned how to design a curriculum which combines social dance and somatic practices for various levels of dancers and learning styles. Next, I learned of the importance of implementing specific movement qualities such as gross and fine motor skills, and exercises that work to improve cognitive aptitude. In addition, I have learned how to

build a more effective curriculum for working with James, which has improved my approach to working with a variety of dancers.

My perspective on dance education has grown tremendously throughout this project. This study has provided me the opportunity to speak with several amazing educators from around the world, including Dieter Rehberg, a somatic movement therapist and creator of the Institute of Physio-Mental Development in Vienna, Austria; a dance instructor with DanceAbility from Geneva; Joanne Lara, creator of Autism Movement Therapy Method; and finally, somatic movement therapist, Martha Eddy.

Dance has made a positive impact in James' life. I along with my colleagues at the dance studio have observed improvements in James' communication, coordination, movement abilities, willingness to cooperate, listen, demonstrate and finally, noticed the amount of trust that has developed between us throughout this process. I am more equipped to deal with certain behaviors and more capable of modifying lessons on the spot as needed. This experience has made me more knowledgeable as an instructor, and has given me the opportunity to share this project and the knowledge gained with other dance educators. I look forward to future lessons with James as well as opportunities to utilize skills and exercises from this study.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

In conclusion, this study has provided me with several learning experiences that relate to pedagogy and the incorporation of somatic methodologies into a ballroom dance curriculum. This study has provided me with an opportunity to better understand James' specific needs. It has expanded my knowledge of specific challenges of autism, as well as strategies that work well for individuals on the spectrum. I have gained a greater insight into family dynamics and the support that it takes from family members for students with unique needs to be successful. James' success was in part due to his caretaker's dedication in finding the best therapeutic modalities to help him address his limitations. I came to greatly respect James' ability to focus his attention as a goal in and of itself.

As I continue to work with James, I will implement many of the same exercises that were utilized in this study. I will continue to analyze the content of each lesson to ensure that it is meeting James' specific needs. In this way, my MFA study will become a model for my future reflective practices as a teacher as I continually assess and modify my pedagogical approaches and content according to student learning interests.

The curriculum in this study may be of use to other dance instructors who work with similar students, as it provides detailed lesson plans as well as insights into some of the challenges of working with someone on the autism spectrum. In addition, the curriculum contains several exercises that encourage greater awareness, partner sensitivity and environmental consciousness.

I have suggestions to offer when working with similar students. First, remember that having goals are important but they are flexible. Be patient with your students and

yourself, as you are also learning to teach in a new context. Be flexible and comfortable modifying lessons in the moment as the participant's needs become clear. Explore different ways of introducing content to catch the student's attention. Incorporate creative exercises, not necessarily exercises that are common for ballroom dance studios, or the given style of movement you are teaching. Be willing to explore movement and feel silly and encourage your students to do the same. Finally, and most importantly, while working with adolescent students with autism or similar conditions is extremely challenging, it is very meaningful and worthwhile work. Through this project I have grown a lot as a teacher and as an individual. This study has shifted my focus in teaching from preparing dancers as competitors, to fostering compassion and care in my students and helping them to reach their fullest potential.

## WORKS CITED

- Alexander, Frederick Matthias, and John Dewey. *The Use of the self*. Methuen, 1931.
- Bakan, Michael. "The Musicality of Stimming: Promoting Neurodiversity in the Ethnomusicology of Autism." *MUSICultures* 41.2 (2014): 133-61. Web.
- Baker, Dana Lee, and Michael Shally-Jensen. "Neurodiversity." *Mental Health Care Issues in America: An Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2013.
- Boon, Maureen. *Understanding Dyspraxia : A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Professionals*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010.
- Briceland, Alicia, and Robert Rickover. "How the Alexander Technique can help with Stage Fright." *Body Learning: The Alexander Technique*, Robert Rickover, 9 Sept. 2017, [bodylearning.buzzsprout.com/382/562490-how-the-alexander-technique-can-help-with-stage-fright](http://bodylearning.buzzsprout.com/382/562490-how-the-alexander-technique-can-help-with-stage-fright).
- Cohen, H., and Rémillard, S. "Autism and Asperger Syndrome: A Spectrum of Disability." *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*. 2006. 617-21. Web.
- Finlayson, Kelsey. "Dance as a vehicle for expression in children with autism spectrum disorder: discovering personal expression for their creative, physical being." *Arizona State University*, 2015.
- Fraleigh, Sondra Horton. *Moving consciously: somatic transformations through dance, yoga, and touch*. University of Illinois Press, 2015.
- Gilbert, Anne Green. *Creative dance for all ages: a conceptual approach*. Human Kinetics, 2015.
- Hammel, Alice, and Ryan M. Hourigan. *Teaching music to students with autism*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Josefsberg, Mark. "20 Tension Relieving Tips | Alexander Technique NYC." *The Alexander Technique | Alexander Technique Teacher NYC, NY.*, 28 Aug. 2015, [www.markjosefsberg.com/top-20-tips-how-to-release-tension/](http://www.markjosefsberg.com/top-20-tips-how-to-release-tension/).
- Kelly, Kate. "Types of Tests for Dyspraxia." *Understood.org*, [www.understood.org/en/school-learning/evaluations/types-of-tests/tests-for-dyspraxia](http://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/evaluations/types-of-tests/tests-for-dyspraxia).
- Lara, Joanne, and Keri Bowers. *Autism movement therapy method: waking up the brain!* Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2016.



- LeFeber, Mariah Meyer . “Dance/Movement Therapy.” *Cutting-Edge Therapies for Autism*, Skyhorse Publishing, 2012, pp. 463–467.
- Madden, Cathy. *Integrative Alexander Technique Practice for Performing Artists : Onstage Synergy*, Intellect, 2014.
- Ons, and DANDA Registered Charity No. 1101323. A Company Limited By Guarantee. Registered In England No. 0477. "Neuro-diversity Diagram." *Word Finding & Speech Problems Neuro-Diversity* (n.d.): n. pag. *Achievability.org.uk*. Developmental Adult Neuro Diversity Association. Web.
- Sanborn, Chris and Joanne Lara, directors. *AUT-EROBICS: Autism Movement Therapy*. 2009.
- Shaghayegh Fard, B., Amir Ahmadi, N. Maroufi, and J. Sarrafzadeh. "Evaluation of Forward Head Posture in Sitting and Standing Positions." *European Spine Journal* 25.11 (2016): 3577-582. Web.
- Shaw, Mark. “The Alexander Technique, Fibromyalgia & CFS: Part 2; End Gaining and the Four Concepts of Good Use.” *The Alexander Technique, Fibromyalgia & CFS: Part 2; End Gaining and the Four Concepts of Good Use*, [www.alexandertechnique.com/articles2/fibro2/](http://www.alexandertechnique.com/articles2/fibro2/).

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORMS

Title: A Case Study of Social Dance instruction and its Holistic Potential:

Diona Peltcs, researcher

*Becky Dyer, principle investigator*

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Becky Dyer in the Department/Division/College of Dance at Arizona State University.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

The potential benefits that this participant may experience include increased kinesthetic responsiveness, attentiveness, greater communication and listening skills and a potential for personal and social growth.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this case study is to observe how social dance combined with somatic practices (exercises that encourage internal, physical perception and experiences of the body perceived from within) impact an adolescent boy with high functioning autism and dyspraxia; a brain condition in children with autism which causes a disruption in the delivery of messages to the body. More specifically, this research seeks to observe the impact that social dance instruction can have on an individual's kinesthetic responsiveness, or efficiency in movement patterning through increased movement awareness and somatic facilitation. Additionally, this study seeks to observe the impact that social dance lessons has had on the participant's communication and listening skills, attentiveness, initiation, organization and performance of movements that might lead to personal and social growth. Finally, the study investigates mindfulness practices and ways to incorporate them into pedagogical practices for adolescents with physical and psychological limitations.

As an MFA student and researcher, I have become interested in 'how' somatic based principles can be applied to social dance instruction to help adolescents better understand how more conscious awareness of bodily movement and somatic practices

might benefit them. Lesson experiences will bridge somatic concepts with kinesthetic body awareness exercises that might enhance movement and attention capacities.

How long will the research last?

This research study will begin after the date the protocol is approved, and will go until December 15, 2017.

How many people will be studied?

One adolescent boy will participate in this study however the research will include interviews with the participant's guardian and sister.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. You can withdrawal from the case study at any time without negative consequences. Additionally, parental consent may be withdrawn at any time. Throughout this case study, data will be gathered from ongoing weekly social dance lessons. Any data or information you or your guardian are not comfortable contributing to the research study can be omitted at any time.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can withdrawal from the case study at any time without negative consequences. Additionally, parental consent may be withdrawn at any time. Throughout this case study, data will be gathered from ongoing weekly social dance lessons. Any data or information you or your guardian are not comfortable contributing to the research study can be omitted at any time.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

Benefits and outcomes of this study cannot be guaranteed however, possible benefits might include a heightened sense of postural awareness, improved balance, efficiency in movement and increased listening and communication skills.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Your data and personal information will be kept secure and anonymous. Organizations other than the researcher that might have access to your information and data would include University research board members who are working to ensure the integrity of the study and security of your privacy. The researcher will be the only one with direct access to data collected from this study.

We are also seeking your permission to audio record the interviews. Only the research team will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted immediately after being transcribed and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity, please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded and I will stop.

- Two interview's will be conducted with the participant, and participant's family caregiver, one at the middle and one at the end of this study. The interview questions for the participant are geared towards better understanding what dance styles the participant prefers, what has been learned thus far and what the participant would like to learn. For the family caregiver, interview questions geared towards better understanding the impact that social dance instruction has had on the participant will be asked. For example, whether they notice an impact, positive or negative, that dance instruction has had on the participant.

- The data will be stored on the researcher's computer which is password protected.

- A pseudonym will be used to ensure your anonymity.

- The original data will be deleted May 2018.

- Video recordings will be stored on the researcher's computer which is password protected. Video recordings will be shared in a power point presentation format at my fourth showing/presentation in my Teaching Praxis Course. ASU undergraduate

students enrolled in this course as well as my MFA committee members will be viewing these videos. The participant's identity will be kept confidential. The recordings will be destroyed after the completion of this project, May 2018.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, talk to the researcher by emailing her at [Diona.peltcs@asu.edu](mailto:Diona.peltcs@asu.edu)

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at [research.integrity@asu.edu](mailto:research.integrity@asu.edu) if:

Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.

You cannot reach the research team.

You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

You have questions about your rights as a research participant.

You want to get information or provide input about this research

**SIGNATURES OF PARTICIPANT, PARENT/GUARDIAN AND FAMILY CAREGIVER**

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

_____	_____
Signature of participant	Date

_____
Printed name of participant

_____	_____
Signature of parent/guardian	Date

_____
Printed name of parent/guardian

_____	_____
Signature of family caregiver	Date

_____
Printed name of family caregiver

_____	_____
Signature of person obtaining consent, Diona Peltcs	Date

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent, Diona Peltcs

## CHILD ASSENT FORM, PARTICIPANT

### A Case Study of Social Dance Instruction and its Holistic Potential

I have been told that my parents (mom or dad) have given permission (said it's okay) for me to take part in a project about social dance instruction and its holistic potential.

I will be asked to participate in ballroom dance lessons that are forty-five minutes in length, once a week, from the date the protocol is approved until December 15, 2017. In addition, I will be interviewed twice by the researcher, Diona Peltcs.

I am taking part because I want to. I know that I can stop at any time if I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant, Sign Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant, Print Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Child participation:

- Attendance of 10 classes, 45 minutes per session in a 9-week period.
- Completion of Pre- and Post-Survey; before the study/dance lesson begins, and when it is completed. (1 Pre- and 1 Post-Survey).
- Recorded video footage of each lesson



## CHILD ASSENT FORM FOR FAMILY CAREGIVER

### A Case Study of Social Dance Instruction and its Holistic Potential

I have been told that my parents (mom or dad) have given permission (said it's okay) for me to take part in a project about social dance instruction and its holistic potential.

I will be asked to participate in ballroom dance lessons that are forty-five minutes in length, once a week, from the date the protocol is approved until December 15, 2017. In addition, I will be interviewed twice by the researcher, Diona Peltcs.

I am taking part because I want to. I know that I can stop at any time if I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Family Caregiver, Sign Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Family Caregiver, Print Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Family Caregiver Participation:

- Transportation for child to and from each session (Once a week for 45 minutes)
- Completion of Pre-and Post-Survey; before the workshop begins and when it is completed (1 Pre- and 1 Post Survey)
- Assistance in video recording the child participant's lesson, approximately 2 – 5 minute's worth of recording

APPENDIX B

LESSON PLAN EXAMPLES

## 2017 Lesson Plan

1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Broad Focus: Self-Awareness of self and Partner through increased body & movement articulation			2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter Broad Focus: Relationship and Awareness to Others and Environment; Embodied Relationship to other people		
Unit 1: Bodily Awareness	Unit 2: Self & Partner Awareness	Unit 3: Attentiveness to Partner	Unit 4: Self, Partner & Environmental Awareness	Unit 5: Environment – Reading the room	Unit 6: Spatial Eye Focus
<b>Main Unit Objective:</b> Increased body awareness	<b>Main Unit Objective:</b> Greater self and partner awareness	<b>Main Unit Objective:</b> Ability to pay closer attention to partner.	<b>Main Unit Objective:</b> Increased awareness to self, partner and environment.	<b>Main Unit Objective:</b> Reading individuals, building off movement.	<b>Main Unit Objective:</b> Familiarity with surroundings; utilizing the environment.
<b>Unit Goals:</b> 1. increased movement articulation 2. increased self-awareness 3. Efficient Movement Patterning	<b>Unit Goals:</b> 1. Attentiveness 2. Initiation 3. Partnership connection	<b>Unit Goals:</b> 1. Interpretation of Movement Patterning 2. Leading with intention	<b>Unit Understanding Goals/Generative Topics/Questions</b> 1. Increased kinesthetic responsiveness 2. Spatial Pathways	<b>Unit Understanding Goals/Generative Topics/Questions</b> 1. Reading/Sensing others 2. Exploring Kinesphere	<b>Unit Understanding Goals/Generative Topics/Questions</b> 1. Using Landmarks 2. Sensing the environment and relationship to space

## 2017 Lesson Plan

<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b> <b>Broad Focus: How to negotiate between Self &amp; Others; Communicating Appropriately and Listening</b>			<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b> <b>Broad Focus: Concepts of Alexander Technique</b>		
<b>Unit 7:</b> Communication Skills	<b>Unit 8:</b> Self-Expression	<b>Unit 9:</b> Listening Skills	<b>Unit 10:</b> Awareness of postural habits	<b>Unit 11:</b> Inhibition and Direction	<b>Unit 12:</b> Inhibition and Direction with a Partner
Main Unit Objective: Communication appropriately.	Main Unit Objective: Artistic and Kinesthetic self-expression	Main Unit Objective: Appropriate responses that show ability to listen.	Main Unit Objective: Postural awareness	Main Unit Objective: Initiating unconscious reactions.	Main Unit Objective: Inhibiting natural tendencies when dancing with a partner.
Unit Goals: 1. Appropriate responses, thoughtful responses 2. Listening and Responding	Unit Goals: 1. Exploring equilibrium 2. Self-sensing 3. Feeling your place in space	Unit Goals: 1. Respect for others 2. Following directions	Unit Goals: Topics/Questions 1. Postural habits 2. Different ways to move 3. AT, four concepts of good use.	Unit Goals: 1. Postural awareness 2. Ways to inhibit 3. Constructive Rest	Unit Goals: 1. Connection 2. Staying grounded and relaxed when connecting to partner 3. Sharing weight equally

## Lesson Plan 1 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate foot and hand articulation, and connect the foot and hand articulation to Rumba box steps and Rumba walks presented today. In addition, the participant will be able to demonstrate greater bodily awareness of hands and feet, and have greater awareness of connection to the floor as well as to their partner.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.PR.4.HS1c

DA.PR.5.HS1a

DA.PR.5.HS1c

Experience 1: Somatic Exercise -

- Fell your feet
- Stand up and bounce a little bit
- Notice if it feels like the ground is reaching up to you, or if you are reaching down to the ground
- Take off your shoes and roll the tennis ball under one of your feet
- Imagine that you are exploring your foot as if for the first time
- Spend extra time gently pressing into tight or tender parts
- After you've explored rolling the tennis ball under one foot, notice if you feel a difference between the two sides. Explore rolling the tennis ball under the other foot.

- When you are done with both feet, notice again if the ground is reaching up to meet you, or if you are reaching down to the ground.
- Next, experiment by rolling the tennis ball under each hand. Notice any tender parts in the hands, and ways that the tennis ball can connect through the palm of the hands.

Experience 2: Foot articulation – place a small piece of paper underneath the working foot, and point the working foot forward in parallel, flex the foot, point the foot, and bring the foot back into a parallel, first position. Try to keep the piece of paper underneath the foot during this entire exercise.

- Experiment with music by sending the foot forward and backward (tendú forward and backward), utilizing a half-time rhythm followed by the original tempo. Repeat on both sides.

Experience 3: Place two small sheets of paper underneath both feet, and explore dancing the Rumba box while experimenting with keeping both pieces of paper underneath the shoes. Try not to lose the paper by staying connected to the floor with the feet.

Experience 4: Implement foot articulation and floor connection during dance figures:

- Rumba box steps
- Cross over breaks
- Spot turn on both sides
- Cuban walks

Questions:

- What are you sensing now?
- Has the tension or stiffness eased up in your feet?
- Are you dancing differently?
- Are you using your feet differently?

Cool down – Begin with head, shoulder and chest isolations. Next, stretch the upper body by reaching side to side. Next, use the top of the head to slowly roll down to the floor, holding the stretch for a few counts. Roll up slowly through each vertebra, and step one leg back for a calf stretch. Switch the legs. Finally, reach one arm across the body, following up this stretch with the other arm.

## Lesson 2 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to apply key concepts of Alexander Technique by applying them throughout today's lesson. In addition, the participant will be able to connect movement with imagery to encourage greater kinesthetic awareness.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.PR.4.HS1c

DA.PR.5.HS1a

DA.PR.5.HS1b

DA.PR.5.HS1c

Brief Discussion: Introduction to Alexander Technique - Alexander Technique, pioneered by F. M. Alexander, seeks to better understand the unconscious, habitual interference with the head-neck-back relationship. Alexander realized that habitual "use" in every-day activities becomes exaggerated during times of stress or excitement, such as performing onstage. He discovered that by consciously inhibiting habits and thinking of direction, he could then stop his old habit pattern, which allowed his head to go forward and up and his back to lengthen and widen.



Experience 1- Let's stop for a moment and take a quick scan of our bodies. What are you sensing? What are you doing with your body? Are you noticing anything? Perhaps stiffness, tight or sore muscles or perhaps little movement?

Our lives naturally pull us forward. When we write, read books, run, type, we are always leaning forward. The more pronounced one's head is forward, the more devastating its effects on the body, resulting in a variety of ailments that may come later in life.

Experience 1 – Begin by facing the mirror, and ask the participant to close their eyes (if comfortable) while the instructor reads F.M. Alexander's four "Concepts of Good Use":

1. Allow your neck to release so that your head can be forward and up, away from the spine as if it was a balloon filled with helium, floating to the sky.

2. Allow your torso to release into length and width. Sense your back, sides, and front in full dimensions.

3. Allow the legs to release away from your pelvis imagine sending energy through the legs to the floor like roots of a tree into the ground

4. Allow your shoulders to release out to the sides and float on the rib cage. Imagine your shoulder blades as two continents, such as the shape of two small Africa's that drift away from each other.

Experience 2: Roll down slowly, one vertebrae at a time, so that the upper body folds forward in a body half. Imagine that your spine is a long strand of light switches. Slowly

roll up, and imagine each light switch (vertebrae) is turning off. Use tactile aid to help demonstrate the light as a light switch, turning off, one at a time.

Experience 3: Learn the following Salsa dance combination -

- Progressive basic (forward and back basic)
- Side breaks
- Basic with right turn for follower
- Basic with right turn for leader
- Cross body lead in closed position

Experience 4: Repeat the four “Concepts of good use”

1. Allow your neck to release so that your head can be forward and up, away from the spine
  2. Allow your torso to release into length and width
  3. Allow the legs to release away from your pelvis
  4. Allow your shoulders to release out to the sides and float on the rib cage
- Dance the salsa combination while keeping the four concepts of good use in mind.
- Questions to ask the participant:
1. What are you sensing now?
  2. Did you see a change in your head and neck in relation to your spine?

3. Has the tension or stiffness eased up in your partner's connection?
4. Are you sensing that you are dancing differently?
5. Where is your head and neck in relation to your spine?

### Lesson 3 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate a greater level of attentiveness and improved eye connection to their environment and dance partner. In addition, the participant will demonstrate eye tracking abilities by tracking different walls and facings with their eyes.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.1.HS1b

DA.PR.4.HS1a

DA.PR.5.HS1a

Warm-up –

- Start by facing the mirror, beginning with Salsa basics for two sets (123, 567 123, 567).
- Add side to side basics for two sets (123, 567 123, 567).
- Facing the mirror, focus on just the arm movements with counts (123, 567 123, 567)
- Add feet with the arm movements: basics salsa step for two sets, side to side basics for two sets. Repeat the whole sequence three times.

Experience 1: Eye tracking

- Cross over breaks in Salsa, beginning in open hand hold. Begin with a focus on your partner, crossover a quarter of a turn to the participants left/partners right, changing focus quickly to the new wall.

- Return to facing each other, and repeat on the other side, focusing quickly on the new wall, returning to face partner. Repeat twice.
- Add a spot turn for both the participant and partner, focusing on the partner, then the wall, the back wall and back to partner.

Questions:

- Did you notice if your movements improved by taking your eyes and head towards a specific wall or facing?
- Did the partner notice a difference in the lead after the participant focused on tracking their eyes towards a specific direction?
- Did the participant notice a difference in the outcome of the dance pattern after tracking specific walls or facings?

Experience 2: Connection with a partner

- Focus on hand connection with your partner. What happens when you explore connections through the hand? Explore shifting the weight from the outside of the palm and fingers to the inside palm of the hands.
- Share weight by experimenting with palm to palm connection. Face your partner and distribute most of your weight into your toes while keeping your heels on the floor. You should share approximately three pounds of pressure towards your partner during this exercise as well as throughout dance frame.
- Practice dance patterns with a partner while connecting and sharing weight.

Experience 3: Combine eye tracking with hand to hand connection

- Dance the Salsa while focusing on different wall facings and staying connected. Can you implement both eye tracking and hand connection?

## Lesson 4 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate a greater awareness to the environment and bodily/spatial awareness. In addition, the participant will demonstrate an ability to generate material borrowed from other dancers sharing the same dance space, such as replicate shapes, dance patterns or tricks.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DR.CR.1.HS1a

DR.CR.1.HS1c

DA.PR.4.HS1a

Warm-up: Begin by standing in front of the mirror and warm up with Latin arm styling, moving the arms from side to side, first at shoulder height and later progressing the arms up towards the ceiling, following through to the midline of the body and back to practice frame, like first position in ballet, where the arms are raised and in front of the body.

Next, shift the weight from side to side with cucarachas, exploring actions that warm up the feet, ankles, knees and hips. Progress the warm-up into a basic Rumba box, thinking about American style technique such as turning out the feet and arriving on a bent knee.

From there, explore rotating the basic Rumba box a quarter of a turn to the left (for leaders) every SQQ. Finally, dance the rotating Rumba box with a partner in dance frame.

Experience 1: Look around the room and notice what other dancers are doing within a shared dance floor space. Select two to three movements that the participant is drawn to or would like to explore, and mimic these movements. It is ok if the movement does not fit a specific style of dance, as the primary focus is to replicate similar movements, shapes and weight shifts.

Experience 2: Incorporate the borrowed movements into a choreography, where the movements, body shape and weight change are implemented into a dance pattern/choreography. Repeat the choreography two to three times before incorporating the movement to music. When it comes time to choose a song, allow the participant to pick something that they would prefer to move to.

Experience 3: Select a different style of dance to review, and implement visual cues. Allow the participant to pick out landmarks within the environment to focus on. For example, when dancing cross over breaks in Cha Cha, the focus could be about looking towards the parking lot followed by looking at the exit sign when moving through to the second cross over break. The key is to find landmarks that will draw the eyes and body towards desired landmark, to help create clear and powerful body actions.



## Lesson 5 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to connect movements that can be demonstrated in sequential order. In addition, the participant will be able to demonstrate an attentiveness to their partner and communicate appropriately.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.3.HS1b

DA.PR.4.HS1a

- If possible, practice in a separate dance space so that the participant has a greater ability to stay focused as well as listen to the song repeatedly.

Warm-up: Mirroring

· With warm up music in the background, have one person be a leader and one person be a follower. Face the mirror and have the leader move isolated body parts slowly. Try to isolate body parts so that shapes and levels can be explored. Switch leaders, repeat.

Experience 1: Select one style of dance from either Ballroom or Rhythm dance styles, and select a song to set the patterns of choreography to. Briefly analyze the characteristics of the song selected. What type of song is it, heavy, light hearted, silly or serious?

Experiment by embodying those characteristics, and discuss literal and figurative movement based on lyrics or mood of the song.

Experience 2:

- Build a set of patterns that can be performed in a specific order (choreography).
- Add music to the choreography, and reiterate literal and figurative movement/characteristics that the dance should contain.

## Lesson 6 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate artistic and kinesthetic self-expression through exercises that explore equilibrium, self-sensing, feeling the place in space and movement improvisation.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.1.HS1b

DA.CR.2.HS1a

DA.PR.4HS1c

Warm-up –

- Foot articulation: review tendú from a turned out first position, sending the foot forward and side.
- Calf articulation: explore relevés, plies and finding a balance while keeping the core engaged.
- Knee articulation: Alternating bending and straightening of the knees exploring Cuban motion and hip action.
- Swing steps forward and backward: bend and send the body and legs forward and backward, following with a side to side motion. Follow this exercises with rise and fall technique from the Waltz.

Experience 1: Free style, time to get explore and create movement!

- How would you modify a ballroom or rhythm dance? Experiment by exploring movement that is off balance.
- What does it feel like to put all your weight on one leg and tip sideways?
- What does it feel like to put all the weight in your toes and tip forward?

Experience 2: How would you explore your personal kinesphere?

- Explore your own personal kinesphere while dancing social dance patterns. Experiment with movement and music to discover how social dance patterns and rhythms can be modified.
- Go off balance, share weight, close your eyes and move through the room without visual senses.

Experience 3: Mirror a partner

- Face your partner and mirror their movement. Explore mirroring isolated body parts, such as the head, shoulders, rib cage, hips, arms and fingers.
- Explore mirroring a partner while moving multiple body parts at the same time.

Cool down – Stretch the upper body by reaching side to side. Next, use the top of the head to slowly roll down to the floor, holding the stretch for a few counts. Roll up slowly, through each vertebra, and step one leg back for a calf stretch. Switch the legs. Finally, reach one arm across the body, and repeat with the other arm.

## Lesson 7 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate an ability to listen, provide appropriate responses, and contribute ideas for choreography. Finally, the participant will be able to demonstrate the ability to follow directions.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.1.HS1a

DA.CR.1.HS1c

DA.CN.10.HS1a

DA.CN.11.HS1a

Experience 1: Continue with the choreography created in lesson 7. Review the entire routine with the song that was selected. Take a moment to discuss ideas or visions for the dance. Does anything come up for the participant? Perhaps the song is related to a specific internet video or other dance choreography. Observe some of the movements for inspiration, or borrow the movements and incorporate them into the dance.

Experience 2: Review the choreography and discuss if any elements should be added. Think about specific choreography tools that can be implemented, for example, does the choreography need level changes, tempo changes, tricks, different facing or perhaps consider lyrics that could inspire specific movement to help with the creative process.

## Lesson 8 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to integrate other dancers movement observed on the dance floor. The participant will demonstrate an ability to observe, modify and borrow movement observed from others to make new movement and choreography.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.1.HS1a

DA.CR.1.HS1c

Warm up –

Roll the top of the head slowly to the floor, rolling through each vertebra, hanging heavy with the weight of your head pulling you closer to the ground. Imagine water rolling down from the bottom of your spine to the back of the head, and to the floor. Shake your head yes and no, releasing any tension in the neck. Gently roll up through the spine, one vertebra at a time. Repeat stretch X 3, adding arms to stretch while hanging heavy on second set, add plié on third set.

Experience 1:

- Standing vertical with weight split between both feet, reach the left arm high above the head to the right, feeling the arch in the left side of the body, come back to vertical.

Repeat right side.

- Now repeat the side stretches in a wide second position, taking the arm stretch all the way to the floor and through to the other side. Repeat right.
- Next, arm swings down to the floor, allowing the head and neck to release. Repeat X 4. Shake out the right leg, shake out the left leg. Shake out the right arm and hand, shake out the left arm and hand.
- Leg swings – Standing with the weight on one leg, release the free weighted leg forward and backward in swing (*en cloché*). Do this while holding onto a partner. Swing the legs freely forward and backward. Try it slumping. Try it standing straight. Switch sides. Sweep the floor with the foot one it comes through first position.

Experience 2: Reading the room. Let's observe some of the other dancers sharing the same floor space. What is their body language saying to you? Can you sense how they are feeling? What are they conveying through their movement? Are they happy, excited, tired, expressive, not showing any expression?

Experience 3: Quickstep!

- Practice running across the room, first without each other and then together in frame. Let's borrow some of the expressive qualities that we have observed from the other dancers in the room.
- Dance skip combination: Step hop, step hop, run run run run, repeat X 3. Try this with music.
- Quarter turns to the right and left. Now implement the borrowed qualities into our basic steps to add expression to our dancing.

Experience 4: Put the running step hops together with the quarter turns right and left with music.



## Lesson 9 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate an ability to initiate unconscious reactions while dancing social dance patterns in a partnership.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.1.HS1b

DA.PR.4.HS1a

DA.PR.4.HS1c

Experience 1:

- Ask the participant to stand on either left or right of their partner (instructor).
- Standing side by side of one another, ask the participant (leader) to offer their hand (left or right hand), with the palm facing up towards the ceiling.
- The partner will place their hand (right or left) on top of the leader's palm.
- Take a walk in this hand hold.
- Observe the way you and your partner walk together. Are you and your partner starting on opposite legs, same legs, inside or outside legs? Switch leader/follower roles!
- Next, take a walk, but have the participant stop randomly. Experiment with initiating stopping while walking. Experiment with walking backwards, sideways, diagonally through the room. Observe how your partner follow's the connection through this hand hold. Switch follower/leader roles!

- Next, have the participant make two points of connection on their partners. One hand to hand connection and one connection on the partner's shoulder blade. Ask the follower (the person with the hand on top of the palm) to close their eyes and follow their partner around the room. Experiment with taking the follower through level changes, such as low, middle and high levels. Asking your partner to go to the floor or step over something is always fun and interesting! Explore the space within the environment. Switch leader/follower roles!

Experience 2: Apply the concepts of initiation and connection to social dance patterns

- Choose a social dance style. For this experience, we will dance Rumba.
- In dance frame, ask the follower to once again close their eyes and stay sensitive to the directions their partners are taking them.
- Experiment with the leader being the one to initiate dance patterns.
- Experiment with the follower initiating dance patterns. For example, if the follower wants to dance an underarm turn, experiment with sending the signals (through dance frame) to the leader so that the leader will catch the signal and lead an underarm turn.

## Lesson 10 – (45 minutes)

Objective: By the end of today's lesson, the participant will be able to demonstrate greater bodily awareness, efficiency in movement and articulation. In addition, the participant will be able to employ Alexander Technique concepts throughout the lesson.

Arizona Dance Standards:

DA.CR.1.HS1b

DA.PR.4.HS1c

DA.PR.5.HS1a

Experience 1: Tension Relieving Tips by Mark Josefsberg – Alexander Technique

1. Pause... Breathe fully
2. Become aware, and then let go of the muscles in the back of your neck.
3. This will move your head up.
4. Free your neck again, and slightly, slowly, lower your nose.
5. Repeat from the beginning. (1, 2, 3, 4). Let your sit bones release down in your chair but, in opposition, your torso and head moves up.
6. Let your jaw dangle open, even when your lips are closed. Teeth open, lips gently touching.
7. Let your throat open as if you're about to whisper 'ah'.
8. Re-visit 1,2,3, and 4.

9. Let your shoulders rest on your ribcage. See if you're lifting them up. Smile, and then let them ease down.
10. While sitting, let go of excess tension in your legs, without collapsing your torso.
11. Think of your knees going away from your torso, and away from each other.
12. Notice if you're squeezing your legs together. Release your thigh muscles. Free your neck of excess tension

Experience 2: From "Creative Dance for all Ages" by Gilbert, Anne Green

Brain Dance – Traveling through general space:

- Breath in straight pathway
- Tactile in a curved path
- Core-distal in a zigzag pathway
- Head-tail in a straight path
- Upper-lower in a curved path
- Body side (with horizontal eye tracking) in a zigzag path
- Cross-lateral (with vertical eye tracking) in a straight path
- Vestibular in a curved path

Experience 3: Straight, Curved, Zig Zag Pathways!

- Dancers read and say the words as they physically demonstrate the concept of pathway.

Experience 4: Link the pathways with social dances that move in that direction, and physically move throughout patterns while considering the pathway's they take

- Straight pathway – Tango, Rumba, Cha Cha, Paso Doble
- Curved path – Viennese Waltz, East Coast Swing
- Zig Zag pathway – Foxtrot, Quickstep
- Head-tail – Samba, Bachata

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

Participant's Interview Questions for the end of study:

1. What do you enjoy about our classes?
2. What's your favorite thing about social dances?
3. What do you think you have learned?
4. What would you like to learn more about?
5. Do you like being part of the social dance community?
6. Do you like coming to dance?
7. When do you feel you can focus or concentrate the most during our lessons?

Participant's Interview Questions for conclusion of study:

1. What did you learn from our lessons?
2. Do you want to keep dancing?
3. What else do you want to learn?
4. What was your favorite thing that we did?

APPENDIX D  
CAREGIVER SURVEYS



Survey Questions #1 for the participant's caregiver:

1. Have you noticed any positive or negative impacts that the study might have had on the participant?
2. Has the participant shown signs of greater kinesthetic responsiveness and increased coordination?
3. Have social dance lessons had an impact on the participant's ability to stay focused and attentive during movement experiences or interactions with others?
  - Ability to stay engaged in lessons.
  - Greater attentiveness towards others, such as politeness or courteousness.
4. Has the participant shown any changes in their communication skills during the social dance lessons or in their outside lives?
6. Have you seen any changes in the participant's social interactions with others since beginning the study? If so, please describe.

Survey Questions #2 for the participant's family caregiver:

1. Have you seen any changes in the participant since beginning the study? If so, what have you noticed?

3. Have you noticed any benefits that the participant has gained since participating in this study?

4. Is there a particular exercise that the participant talks to you about?

5. Is there anything that the participant does that shows creativity or exploration in their own world?

6. What are some of the daily activities that may be difficult for the participant that may:

- a. trigger frustration
- b. Trigger anxiety
- c. anything else

7. Please describe the mood/behavior of the participant prior to dropping him off:

8. Please describe the mood/behavior of the participant after picking him up: